

# **Spreading the Word:** Rural Marketing & Publicity in Nebraska

**Presented by:**



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## **Structures**

Statewide institution serving communities, organizations and donors

## **Approaches**

- Brief Description/Foundation Mission Statement:  
The Nebraska Community Foundation exists to help concerned individuals mobilize charitable giving in support of the betterment of Nebraska communities and organizations.
- Formal Marketing Techniques/Materials:
  1. Annual report
  2. Technical Assistance and Educational materials
  3. Customized materials for affiliated funds
  4. Video with customer testimonials
  5. Website [www.nebcommfound.org](http://www.nebcommfound.org)
- Informal Marketing: Word of mouth, networking and building a quality reputation
- Engaging the Media:
  1. Grassroots/community-based success stories (clippings are a great marketing tool!)
  2. Identifying and analyzing macro impacts (e.g. impact of estimated wealth transfer)
- Techniques for Targeting Various Rural Audiences:
  1. Community and Organizational leaders: Foundation can relieve volunteers from administrative responsibilities (accounting, audit, legal, insurance, etc.); plug into an economy-of-scale
  2. Financial planners: Perpetual, sophisticated organization; certainty client wishes will be fulfilled; one-stop shop
  3. Donors: Assurance their wishes will be fulfilled; administrative and cost efficiencies; opportunity to benefit numerous charitable causes; confidentiality/anonymity if requested

**Key approach the Foundation uses is to emphasize value-added services (NCF provides quality and sophistication above and beyond the available time and expertise of most community leaders and volunteers) at every functional level that will ultimately help create and endow substantial capital for community reinvestment.**

## **Resources**

- Who is involved in NCF marketing: Staff, Board and Community leaders  
(Note: Nearly all NCF marketing has occurred informally, as the lesson was learned early on that aggressive marketing increased demand for services, but did not necessarily increase donations or donor inquiries.)
- Resources needed and commitment made to market NCF  
Foundation Board and Officers have always used the working assumption that the best marketing is to build a stellar reputation as a competent trustee/fiduciary and problem-solving organization. Therefore, resource commitment is two-fold: excellent administrative services and quality community-based technical assistance

## **Developing and Monitoring**

- Process used to develop marketing approach:  
Evolved over time; Trusting relationships identified as key; Emphasis on being on-the-ground and solving community problems
- Tracking, monitoring and evaluation:  
Still evolving: Primarily based upon growth to-date; Key indicators currently include number of affiliated funds, size/activity of funds; total contributions; average contribution size; types/sophistication level of projects (e.g. more public-private partnerships, larger capital campaigns, concentration on key community needs)

## **Lessons Learned**

- Three toughest experiences/challenges with rural marketing
  1. Community leaders, financial planners and donors understanding how the Nebraska Community Foundation can really help them add-value. Still fighting perception of money just going to Lincoln
  2. Covering massive distance, geography and approximately 500 small towns statewide
  3. Keeping message simple, clear and consistent
  
- Three best experiences with rural marketing
  1. Small town newspapers/media very receptive to covering community opportunities and good news
  2. Trusting relationships with community leaders are key to most effective rural marketing, which is based in a quality reputation
  3. Ability for NCF to mass-produce general marketing materials which can be customized for nearly all affiliated funds
  
- Three key lessons or pieces of advise:
  1. To succeed, community leaders **MUST KNOW YOU**
  2. To succeed, community leaders **MUST SEE YOU**
  3. To succeed, community leaders **MUST TRUST YOU**